

Refusals in Javanese and English

A comparative study of saying 'no' in two different cultures

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Abstract

Refusing is a common speech act; nonetheless people from different cultural backgrounds employ different refusal strategies. The present study compares refusal strategies used between native speakers of Javanese in Indonesia and native speakers of British English in the United Kingdom. Empirical data were elicited by means of discourse completion tasks. The findings showed that Javanese and British native speakers favoured indirect refusal strategies and used approximately similar sequential orders of refusals, although the types of semantic formulas and adjuncts involved were different. Awareness of different social status levels tended to induce different frequencies of the use of semantic formulas and adjuncts of refusals whereas different initiating acts of refusals generated different use of the types of semantic formulas and adjuncts.

Keywords: *refusals, invitations, offers, sequential order, semantic formula*

Introduction

A refusal usually coming as a response to initiating acts such as requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions is common language use in our daily interpersonal interactions. Despite the fact, it is considered a sticking point (Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz, 1990) and intrinsically face threatening as refusers disregard the positive face of the addressees (Brown and Levinson, 1987). As a face-threatening act, a refusal requires a rigorous planning, sequences of negotiation, and selection of appropriate strategies that could maintain the recipients' face (Barron, 2007), yet the process of refusing takes place in very limited time to respond to the initiating acts, therefore it is very demanding (Gass and Houck, 1999).

Refusal is a complicated speech act as its realization is sensitive to various aspects such as cultural norms (Beebe et al., 1990; Yang, 2008), social status of the interlocutors (Nelson, Carson, Al-Batal, and El-Bakary, 2002; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Kwon, 2004; Wannaruk, 2008), the initiating acts of refusals (Chang, 2008; Genc and Tekyildiz, 2009), degree of formality (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006), pragmalinguistic competence (Wijayanto, 2016), and politeness or face maintenance (Al-Khatib, 2006; Chen, 1995; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Nugroho, 2000; Wijayanto, 2013). Even speakers using the same language select different refusal strategies due to different factors such as gender, status levels, and familiarities with other interlocutors (Hyanny, 2001; Oktoprinasakti, 2006; Prawito, 2007; Utomo, 2007).

A number of cross-cultural pragmatic studies have reported that refusals are culturally specific; refusers from different cultural backgrounds apply different types or contents of semantic formulas and levels of directness (Al-Kahtani, 2005; Beebe et al., 1990; Kwon, 2004; Liao and Bresnahan, 1996; Nelson, Carson, Al-Batal,

and El-Bakary, 2002). Despite the growing body of cross cultural studies of refusals, little research has compared refusal strategies between Javanese and British English. This paper reports refusal strategies deployed by native speakers of Javanese in Indonesia as compared with the ones employed by native speakers of British English in the United Kingdom.

Literature Review

Studies have reported that strategies of performing refusals are influenced by many aspects. A study by Félix-Brasdefer (2006) revealed that different degrees of formality of social interactions induced variations of refusal strategies by Mexican Spanish speakers. Félix-Brasdefer reported that indirect refusals were preferred in informal situations whereas direct refusals were employed more frequently in formal situations. Adjuncts of refusals were employed in formal situations more often than in informal ones. A study by Oktoprimasakti (2006) investigated refusals by Indonesians. Oktoprimasakti reported that awareness of differences in status levels affected the use of semantic formulas and adjunct of refusals. For example, apologies were used to speakers of low status less frequently than to those of equal status and they were used to those of high status the most often. White lies were often used by low status speakers. Reasons and criticisms were used by high status speakers.

A study by Al-Khatib (2006) investigated strategies of refusals to invitations used by Jordanian native speakers. Al-Khatib reported that refusers frequently initiated refusals with apologies. Then they employed a variety of formulaic expressions of good wishes reflecting Islamic belief such as *inšallah bil'afrah* ('God willing, on other happy occasions') or *reitu çamir inšallah* ('Your house is full of happiness, God willing') and used tentative future acceptances such as *baqdariş awçdik basraah açmal juhdi* ('I cannot promise, but I'll do my best') and *Inšallah idha manşayalit* ('God willing, if I don't have something else to do').

Studies of refusals in Javanese have revealed that gender differences inform speakers to use different use of refusal strategies. A study by Hyanny (2001) reported that direct refusals were employed more often by female than by male speakers. The male speakers were more apologetic than were the female speakers. Nevertheless, the female speakers showed appreciation and used face saving strategies more often than did the male speakers. In addition, although the female speakers hesitated more often than did the male speakers, they grumbled more frequently than did the male speakers. A study by Utomo (2007) compared refusal strategies between male and female Javanese speakers. Utomo reported that regret was highly used by female speakers whereas mitigated refusals were frequently used by male speakers. In line with Hyanny's (2001) findings, Utomo reported that the female speakers used direct refusals more often than did the male speakers.

Other studies reported that as compared with other ethnic groups in Indonesia, native speakers of Javanese mostly favour indirect refusals. A study by Prawito (2007) compared refusal strategies between Javanese and Indonesian Chinese in East Java. He reported that the Javanese speakers preferred indirect strategies to direct ones and they always used politeness to consider the other collocutors' feelings. By contrast the Indonesian Chinese tended to express their refusals directly and they often used criticisms, which were not commonly used by the Javanese participants. A study by Esterlina (2008) reported that Javanese speakers used indirect refusal strategies more frequently as compared with Batakese who often used criticisms and explicit refusals.

Cross-cultural pragmatic studies of refusals have reported that speakers from different cultural backgrounds apply different types and contents of semantic formulas of refusals as well as different use of direct and indirect strategies. A study by Beebe et al. (1990) compared refusal strategies between native speakers of American English (NSEs) and native speakers of Japanese (NJs). Beebe et al. reported that both native speakers tended to use similar order of semantic formulas and adjuncts. They initiated refusals with adjuncts such as fillers, gratitude, and positive agreement. Nevertheless, when refusing a lower status, unlike NJs, NSEs expressed regret right after the adjuncts. As Japanese is commonly status conscious, NJs varied the

types and frequencies of semantic formulas across different status levels. By contrast, NSEs used similar semantic formulas across different status levels. Regarding the contents of semantic formulas, NJs employed vague and less specific excuses whereas NSEs used very specific ones.

A study by Liao and Bresnahan (1996) compared strategies of refusals to requests between Americans and Chinese. Liao and Bresnahan reported that positive agreements along with reasons and apologies were generally applied by the American participants. Unlike the American subjects however, the Chinese speakers tended to avoid positive opinions/agreements because they were afraid that they would be forced to comply with the requests.

A study by Nelson et al. (2002) compared refusal strategies between Americans speakers of English (ASEs) and Egyptian native speakers (ENSs). Nelson et al. reported that ASEs and ENSs commonly used direct strategies. However, as ENSs were status conscious, they tended to vary direct refusals according to different status levels of the interlocutors. By contrast, ASEs used direct refusals relatively similar across different status levels.

A study by Kwon (2004) compared refusal strategies between American speakers of English (ASEs) and Korean native speakers (KNSs). Both ASEs and KNSs used different refusal strategies according to differences in social status levels and initiating acts of refusals. When refusing requests, ASEs employed statements of principle only with equal status collocutors. By contrast KNSs used them only with higher status collocutors. When refusing invitations, ASEs employed statements of alternative only with equal status interlocutors whereas KNSs used them across the three status levels. When declining offers, ASEs made use of dissuasion and statements of philosophy to collocutors of lower status. By contrast KNSs use it to all status levels similarly.

Al-Kahtani (2005) studied refusal strategies among Americans, Japanese, and Arabs. Al-Kahtani reported that the three groups of the native speakers similarly varied the sequential orders and frequencies of semantic formulas of refusals according to different status levels of the refusers and the initiating acts of refusals. Nevertheless, the contents of semantic formulas (i.e., excuses) used by the Japanese and Arabs were not as specific as the ones used by the Americans. In addition, the Japanese and Arab participants frequently used formal language styles that were rarely used by the American participants.

Although there are ample cross-cultural studies on refusal strategies, few studies have compared refusal strategies between Javanese and British English. The present study is an attempt to compare the ways in which refusals are realized by native speakers of Javanese in Indonesia and native speakers of British English in the United Kingdom. The findings of the present study might extend current knowledge of refusal strategies across different languages and cultures. The study raised the following research questions: (1) Do native speakers of Javanese and British English use direct and indirect refusal strategies similarly? (2) Do native speakers of Javanese and British English use sequential orders of refusals similarly? (3) Do social status levels affect different use of semantic formulas and adjuncts of refusals?

Method

Participants

The present study compared refusals strategies employed by two groups of participants: (1) Native speakers of Javanese (referred to henceforth as NJs) and (2) Native speakers of British English (referred to henceforth as NBEs). The NJ group consisted of 35 participants comprising 20 females and 15 males living in Surakarta and Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The ages of the NJs ranged between 19 to 54 years old. The NBE group consisted of 20 participants comprising 6 males and 14 females living in Aberdeen city, United Kingdom.

The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 52 years old. The participants were selected through a random sampling technique.

Instrument

The data of the study comprised a series of written responses collected through discourse completion tasks (DCTs). The DCTs were short written descriptions of scenarios, followed by a short dialogue between one participant in the scenarios, whose utterances were provided verbatim, and the research informants, whose utterances were left entirely blank. The informants were asked to write in the gaps what they would say. The DCTs of the present study consisted of six social situations that were adopted from Wijayanto (2013, 2016). The speaker in each DCT represented a refuser with different status levels (lower and equal) and two different familiarities (close and familiar). Two initiating acts of refusals (invitations and offers) were used as the prompts of refusals. The DCT scenarios and social situations of the DCTS were designed to be as realistic as possible to both British and Javanese contexts. For this purpose, they were developed by consulting with two native speakers of British English and two native speakers of Javanese, who were all lecturers of language studies.

Table 1: *Summary of the DCT scenarios*

| Situation | Scenarios | Speaker's social status | Speaker's social distance | Imposition |
|-------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| Situation 1 | Declining a close friend's invitation to go to the beach. | Equal | Close | Low |
| Situation 2 | Declining an invitation to go to a boss's house warming party. | Lower | Familiar | High |
| Situation 3 | Declining a student's invitation to go to a party. | Equal | Familiar | Low |
| Situation 4 | Declining a close friend's offer to use a printer. | Equal | Close | Low |
| Situation 5 | Declining a boss's offer to fix a faulty motorcycle. | Lower | Familiar | Low |
| Situation 6 | Declining a student's offer of help. | Equal | Familiar | Low |

Procedure

For the Javanese participants, the data collection was administered in Surakarta and Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The respondents were required to respond the DCTs in Javanese. For the British English participants, the data collection was conducted in Aberdeen, the United Kingdom. The respondents were required to respond the DCT scenarios in English. Before answering the DCTs, each research participants had received some explanations about their roles in the scenarios. When answering the ODCTs, they had to imagine that they were in the situations as described in the DCT scenarios and they had to respond them as they would do in real-life situations.

The data of refusal strategies were analysed based on Beebe et al. (1990). To ensure the reliability of the data, the classifications of semantic formulas and adjuncts were coded by four independent raters (two native speakers of British English and two native speakers of Javanese). They were trained in the refusal classifications according to Beebe et al.'s (1990) coding scheme and they coded the data independently. The coders mostly (98%) agreed each with other for the coding.

Data Coding

Adopting Beebe et al.'s (1990) coding scheme, the refusal strategies in the present study were classified according to the types of semantic formulas (the main utterances to perform refusals) and adjuncts (utterances which do not express refusals but they go with semantic formulas to provide particular effects to given refusals). Refusals could be expressed directly and indirectly. A direct refusal consisted of either:

- a. A performative refusal (e.g., 'I refuse')
- b. A non-performative statement expressing negative willingness or inability and No directly (e.g., 'I can't'; 'No').

An indirect strategy was expressed by means of one or more semantic formulas of which the following were the most common types:

- a. Apology/regret (e. g., 'I'm so sorry ..., 'unfortunately ...', etc.)
- b. Wish (e.g., 'I wish I could go').
- c. Excuse, reason, explanation for not complying (e.g., 'I have other appointment').
- d. Statement (offer or suggestion) of an alternative (e.g., 'I'd rather ..., 'I'd prefer ...'; Why don't you do X instead of Y').
- e. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., 'I'll go next time').
- f. Statement of principles (e.g., 'I never do business with friend').
- g. Set conditions for future acceptance (e.g., 'if I am not busy I will go to your party').
- h. Statement of philosophy (e.g., things break any way; this kind of things happen').
- i. Dissuade interlocutors by stating negative consequences (e.g., 'I won't be any fun tonight'), criticising (e.g., 'that's a terrible idea'), letting off a hook (e.g., 'That's okay'), doing a self-defence (e.g., 'I'm doing my best').
- j. Acceptance (e.g., 'yes, but...; Ok I will but...).
- k. Avoidance that is expressed by verbal acts such as changing the subject, joking, or hedging, or by non-verbal acts such as silence, and physical departure.

Four adjuncts might be added to either of the two basic strategies:

- a. Positive opinions/feelings/agreements (e.g., That's great/ I'd love to...').
- b. Empathy (e.g., 'I realize you are in a difficult situation').
- c. Fillers (e.g., 'uhh' 'well' 'oh' 'uhm').
- d. Gratitude/appreciation (e.g., 'Thank you so much').

To accommodate the data of the present study, one direct refusal strategy and three adjuncts were added. The added direct strategy was *inapplicability*, for example 'I don't think so'. The additional adjuncts included *asking for assurance*, (e.g., 'are you sure? but don't you use it?'), *wishing for good luck/good time* (e.g., 'I hope you have a great party'; have a nice weekend'), and *expressing awkwardness* to show embarrassment, for example '*aku ra kepenake*' ('I feel awkward').

The semantic formulas and adjuncts of each elicited refusal were classified and identified by tags in a sequential order, thus for example “*uhm...no, I can't, I will be very busy*” was coded as filler + No + inability + excuse. A sequential order is the organization of semantic formulas and adjuncts of refusals. For example, filler + inability + excuse/explanation is a sequential order that consists of three slots (filler is in the first slot, inability in the second, and excuse/explanation in the third). Adjuncts or semantic formulas used more than once were treated as a repeated representation of a single slot. Thus, for example filler + gratitude + excuse + excuse +excuse was formulated as adjunct(s) + excuse (s). When two or more types of semantic formulas or adjuncts occurred frequently in the same slot, they were classified as the alternative of the same slot. Those that were relatively common, but they were used with lower frequency than other segments in a dominant sequential order were marked with \pm , indicating an optional semantic formulas or adjuncts.

Findings

The Use of Direct and Indirect Strategies

The study compared the direct and indirect refusal strategies across the six DCT situations to observe whether NJs and NBEs used the strategies similarly. Pearson's chi-square test with a .05 level of significance was used to assess whether the occurrences of the direct and indirect refusal strategies were significantly different.

To decline an invitation to a collocutor of equal-close (DCT situation 1), NBEs and NJs used indirect refusal strategies slightly more often than direct ones, although the difference was not significant, $\chi^2(1, N=200) = 0.0202, p < .05$. A significant difference was found in the refusals to an invitation to a collocutor of higher-familiar (DCT situation 2): both NJs and NBEs applied indirect strategies markedly more often than direct ones, $\chi^2(1, N=200) = 4.9721, p < .05$. However, NBEs used the indirect strategies (80%) more frequently than did NJs (66%). A significant difference was also found in the refusals to an invitation to those of equal-familiar (DCT situation 3): both NJs and NBEs employed direct strategies significantly more frequently than indirect ones, $\chi^2(1, N=200) = 14.245, p < .05$. However, NJs used the direct strategies (80%) markedly more often than did NBEs (55%).

Refusing an offer to a collocutor of equal-close (DCT situation 4), both NJs and NBEs employed indirect strategies significantly more often than direct ones, $\chi^2(1, N=200) = 9.7581, p < .05$. However, NBEs used the indirect strategies (85%) more frequently than did NJs (66%). As NJs and NBEs declined an offer to a collocutor of higher-familiar (DCT situation 5), NJs employed indirect strategies more often than direct ones. By contrast, NBEs used direct strategies markedly more frequently than indirect ones. The differences were significant, $\chi^2(1, N=200) = 9.1503, p < .05$. Declining an offer to a collocutor of equal-familiar (DCT situation 6), both NJs and NBEs employed direct strategies significantly more often than indirect ones, $\chi^2(1, N=200) = 10.7843, p < .05$. Nevertheless, NJs used the direct strategies (77%) more frequently than did NBEs (55%).

NJs used the direct and indirect refusals strategies to invitations across the three situations (situation 1, 2 and 3) significantly differently, $\chi^2(1, N=105) = 15.9184, p < .05$. A significant difference was also found in the use by NJs of the direct and indirect refusals strategies to offers across the three situations (situation 4, 5 and 6), $\chi^2(1, N=105) = 13.3929, p < .05$. By contrast, NBEs used the direct and indirect strategies to invitations across the three situations (situation 1, 2 and 3) with no significant difference, $\chi^2(1, N=60) = 5.4167, p < .05$. A significant difference was found in the use by NBEs of the direct and indirect refusals strategies to offers across the three situations (situation 4, 5 and 6), $\chi^2(1, N=60) = 12.9911, p < .05$.

Sequential orders of refusals

Sequential orders of refusals to a close friend's invitation

DCT Scenario 1:

You meet your close friend in the library. He invites you to go to the beach, but you cannot go.

Your friend: "*I am going to the beach next Sunday. Will you come along?*"

You say:

To express direct refusal strategies, most NJs used *Inability* and *Direct No* followed by *Excuse*. By contrast, NBEs used only *Inability* followed with *Excuse*. Both NJs and NBEs preceded the *Inability* with adjunct(s) such as *Filler* and *Positive opinion/agreement*. To express refusals indirectly, NJs initiated the refusals with adjuncts followed by *Apology/regret* and *Excuses*, and they often concluded the refusals with *Future acceptances*. By contrast, NBEs used *Excuse* that was initiated by adjuncts (mostly *Positive opinion/agreement*) and they concluded the refusals with *Future acceptance* or adjuncts such as *Wishing for good luck/good time*. The sequential orders are summarized by Table 2.

Table 2: *The most common sequential orders of refusals to a friend's invitation*

| Group | Strategy | Sequential order | | | |
|-------|----------|------------------|----------------|------------|--------------------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| NJ | Direct | Adjunct | Inability | Excuse | |
| | | No | Excuse | | - |
| | Indirect | Adjunct | Apology/regret | Excuse | ±Future acceptance |
| | | | | | |
| NBE | Direct | Adjunct(s) | Inability | Excuse | |
| | Indirect | Adjunct | Excuse | ± Future | |
| | | | | Acceptance | |
| | | | | Adjunct | |

Sequential Orders of refusals to a boss's invitation

DCT Scenario 2:

Your boss invites you to go to his house warming party, but you cannot go.

Your boss: "We are going to have a house warming party next Saturday. We will be very happy if you can come".

You say:

To refuse the invitation directly, NJs and NBEs similarly initiated their refusals with *Filler* followed directly by *Apology/regret*, *Inability* and *Excuse*. NBEs often concluded their refusals with *Wishes for good luck/good time*. To decline the invitation indirectly, NJs recurrently used *Apology/regret* along with *Excuse* that was sometimes initiated by adjunct(s) such as *Positive opinion/agreement* and *Gratitude*. By contrast, NBEs used ranges of sequential orders, mostly comprising *Excuse* and some adjuncts (e.g., *Positive opinion/agreement*, *Gratitude*, and *Filler*). They sometimes preceded the *Excuse* with *Apology/regret* and concluded refusals with *Gratitude* or *Wishing for good luck/good time*. The sequential orders are summarized by Table 3.

Table 3: The most common sequential orders of refusals to a boss's invitations

| Group | Strategy | Sequential order | | | |
|-------|----------|------------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| NJ | Direct | Adjunct | Apology/regret | Inability | Excuse |
| | Indirect | Adjunct | Apology/regret | Excuse | |
| NBE | Direct | Adjunct | Apology/regret | Inability | Excuse |
| | | | | | Adjunct (Good luck) |
| | Indirect | Adjunct | ±Apology/regret | Excuse | ± Adjunct |
| | | | | | (Good luck/ gratitude) |

Sequential Orders of refusals to a student's invitation

DCT Scenario 3:

You are a senior lecturer at the school of Arts and Literature. A student representative invites you to go to a party of fresher orientation days, but you cannot go.

Student: "We are going to have a party next Saturday night. We would be very pleased if you could come"

You say: ...

To decline the invitation directly, NJs and NBEs used approximately similar sequential orders. They started refusals with *Apology/regret* followed by *Inability* that was sometimes initiated by adjuncts. To refuse the invitation indirectly, NJs initiated refusals with *Apology/regret* followed by *Excuse*. By contrast, NBEs opened refusals with adjuncts followed by *Excuse* and *Apology/regret* and concluded the refusals with *Wishing for good luck/good time*. The sequential orders are summarized by Table 4.

Table 4: *The most common sequential orders of refusals to a student's invitation*

| Group | Strategy | Sequential order | | | |
|-------|----------|--------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| NJ | Direct | ±Adjunct | Apology/regret | Inability | Excuse |
| | Indirect | Apology/ Regret | Excuse | | |
| NBE | Direct | Adjunct | Apology/regret | Inability | ±Excuse |
| | Indirect | ±Adjunct | Apology/regret | Excuse | ±Adjunct (Good luck/good time) |

Sequential orders of refusals to a close friend's offer

DCT Scenario 4:

One day your close friend drops by your flat while you are doing your assignment. He knows that you don't have a printer. He offers you his printer to use. You decline his offer.

Your friend: *"If you need a printer for printing your assignment you can always use mine"*

You say: ...

As NJs refused the offer directly, they used *Direct No* followed directly by *Gratitude*, then *Dissuasion* and *Alternative*. By contrast, NBEs used *Direct No* followed directly by *Dissuasion*, then *Alternative* or *Gratitude*. When refusing the offer indirectly, NJs initiated their refusals with adjunct(s) followed by *Dissuasion* or *Excuse* and they concluded the refusals with *Alternative*. By contrast, NBEs initiated refusals with *Alternative* that was often concluded by adjuncts. The sequential orders are summarized by Table 5.

Table 5: *The most common sequential orders of refusals to a close friend's offer*

| Group | Strategy | Sequential Orders | | | |
|-------|----------|-------------------|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | | | |
|-----|----------|---------|------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| NJ | Direct | No | Adjunct (gratitude) | Dissuasion | ±Alternative |
| | Indirect | Adjunct | Dissuasion Excuse | ±Alternative | |
| NBE | Direct | No | Dissuasion | ±Alternative ±Gratitude | |
| | Indirect | Adjunct | Alternative | ±Adjunct | |

Sequential Orders of refusals to a boss's offer

DCT Scenario 5:

You are at the parking lot. You are starting your motorbike, but it does not start. Your boss is parking his car opposite to your motorbike. He approaches you and offers help, but you decline it.

Your boss: “*Anything I can do to help?*”

You say:

To decline the offer directly, NJs initiated their refusals with *Direct No* followed by *Gratitude* or *Dissuasion*. NBEs mostly used *Direct No* followed directly by *Gratitude* and they closed their refusals with *Dissuasion*. To decline the offer indirectly, both NJs and NBEs initiated their refusals with adjuncts (*Fillers* or *Gratitude*) followed by *Dissuasion*, and/or *Alternative*. The sequential orders are summarized by Table 6.

Table 6: *The most common sequential orders of refusals to a boss's offer*

| Group | Strategy | Sequential Orders | | | |
|-------|----------|-------------------|-------------------------------|------------|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| NJ | Direct | No | Gratitude Dissuasion | | |
| | Indirect | Adjunct | Dissuasion(s) | | |
| NBE | Direct | No | Gratitude | Dissuasion | |
| | Indirect | Adjunct | Alternative Dissuasion | | |

Sequential Orders of refusals to a student' offer

DCT Scenarios 6:

You are a lecturer. Now you are busy packing books and folders that will be moved to your new office. One of your students whom you know well shows up to ask you about his assignment. Noticing that you still have a lot of books to be removed from your book shelves, he offers you help, but you decline it.

Student: "Is there anything I could do to help?"

You say: ...

To refuse the offer directly, NJs opened their refusals with *Gratitude* followed by *Direct No* and *Dissuasion*. NBEs opened refusals with *Direct No* followed by *Gratitude* and *Dissuasion*. To express refusals indirectly, NJs initiated the refusals with *Gratitude* followed by *Dissuasion*. NBEs did similarly, but they sometimes concluded the refusals with *Avoidance*. The sequential orders are summarized by Table 7.

Table 7: The most common sequential orders of refusals to a student's offer

| Group | Strategy | Sequential orders | | | |
|-------|----------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| NJ | Direct | Adjunct (Gratitude) | No | Dissuasion | |
| | Indirect | Adjunct(s) (Gratitude) | Dissuasion | | |
| NBE | Direct | No | Adjunct (Gratitude) | Dissuasion | |
| | Indirect | Adjunct (Gratitude) | Dissuasion | ±Avoidance Adjunct | |

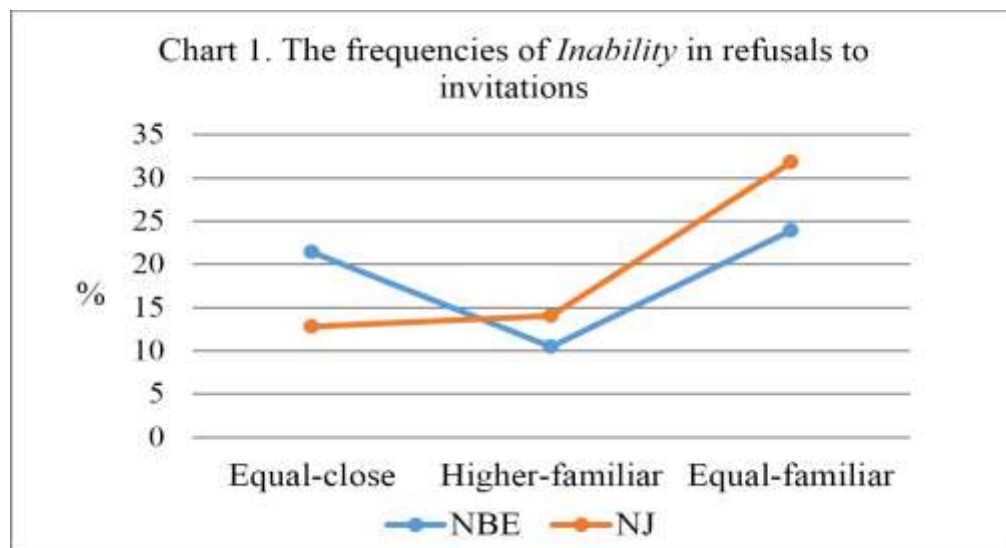
The Influence of Status Levels on the Use of Semantic Formulas and Adjuncts of Refusals

The following sections discuss the effects of status levels on the use of semantic formulas and adjuncts. In general, when NJs and NBEs declined invitations and offers they used similar types of semantic formulas and adjuncts. However, they tended to vary the frequencies of semantic formulas and adjuncts according to collocutors' status levels.

The Use of Semantic Formulas

Inability

Inability was mostly applied to decline invitations. Chart 1 shows that the research participants varied the frequencies of *Inability* according to differences in the status levels. NBs used it to equal-familiar collocutors slightly more often than to those of equal-close, and they used it to those of higher-familiar the least often. By contrast, NJs employed it to those of equal-familiar notably more frequently than to those of equal-close and higher-familiar, who used it more or less similarly.



Direct No

This semantic formula was mostly applied to decline offers. Even though it was also applied to decline invitations, it was used only in refusals to equal-close collocutors.

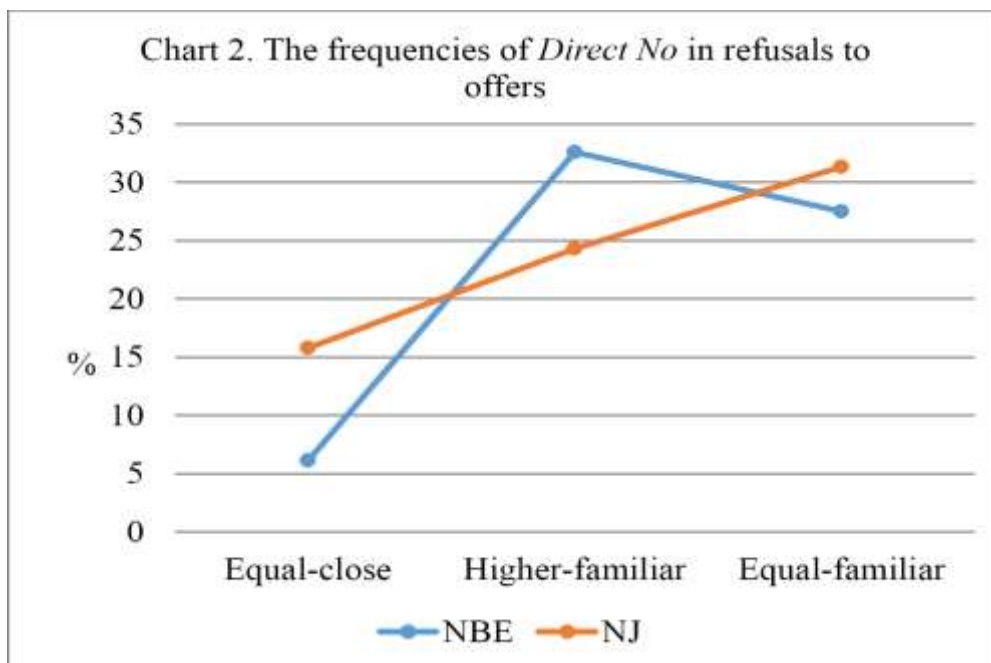


Chart 2 shows that the research participants varied the frequencies of the Direct *No* according to the differences in the status levels. NBs employed it to higher-familiar collocutors more often than to those of equal-familiar, and they used it to those of equal-close notably the least frequently. By contrast, NJs employed it to those of equal-familiar more often than to those of higher-familiar, and they used it to those of equal-close notably the least.

Excuse/explanation

Excuse/explanation was recurrently employed to justify refusals to invitations and offers. Chart 3 displays the frequencies of *Excuse/explanation* in refusals to invitations and shows that the research participants varied the frequencies of *Excuse/explanation* according to the differences in the status levels. NBEs used it to higher-familiar collocutors notably more often than to those of equal-close, and they used it to those of equal-familiar the least often. By contrast, NJs employed it to those of equal-close notably more often than to those of equal-familiar, and they used it to those of higher-familiar the least.

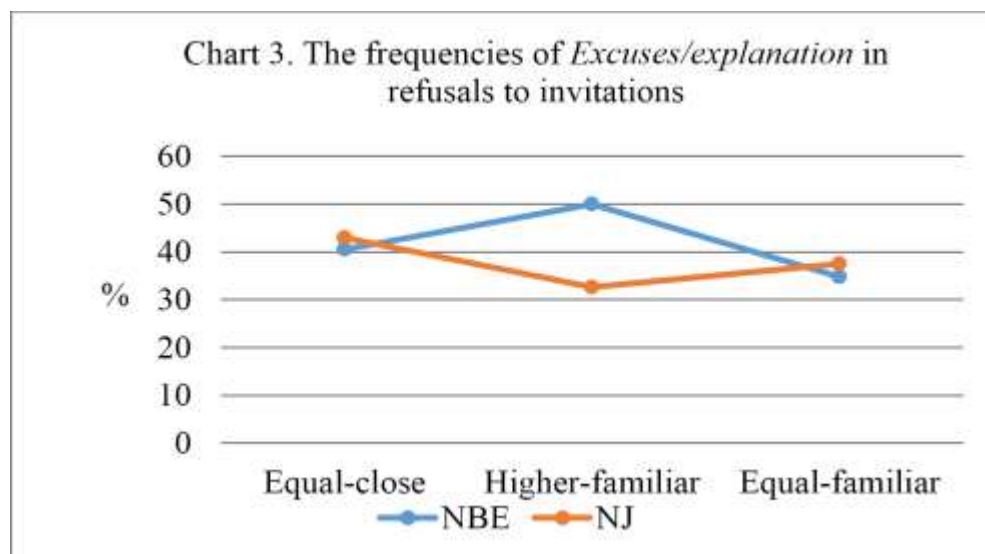
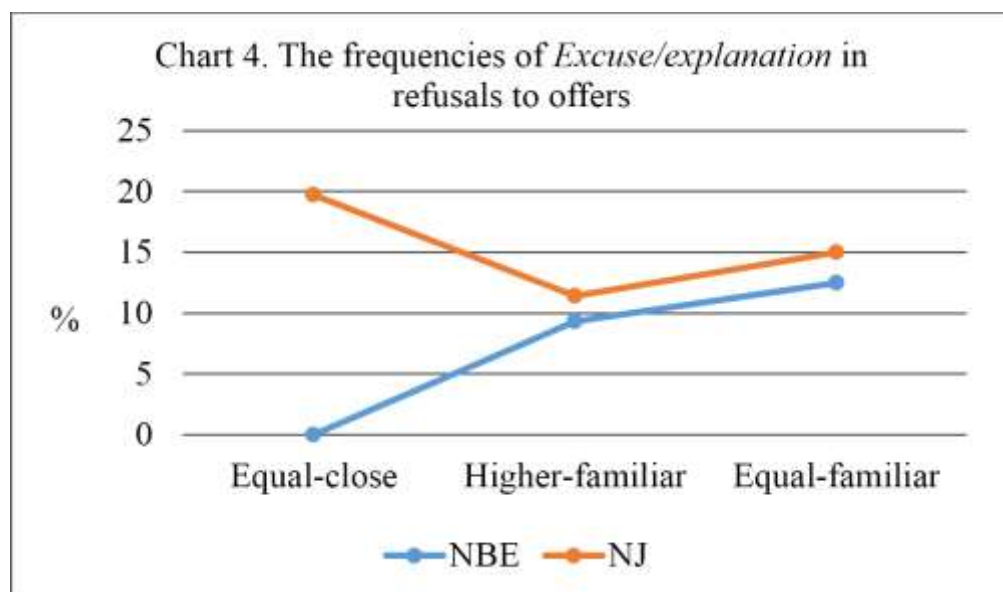
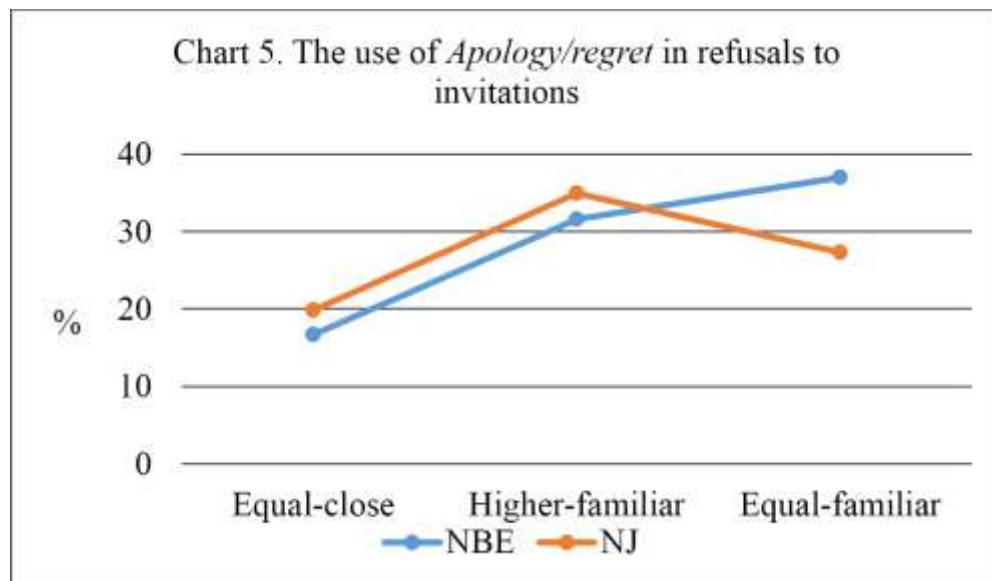


Chart 4 shows the frequencies of *Excuse/explanation* in refusals to offers. The differences in the interlocutors' status levels induced different frequencies of *Excuse/explanation*.



Apology/regret

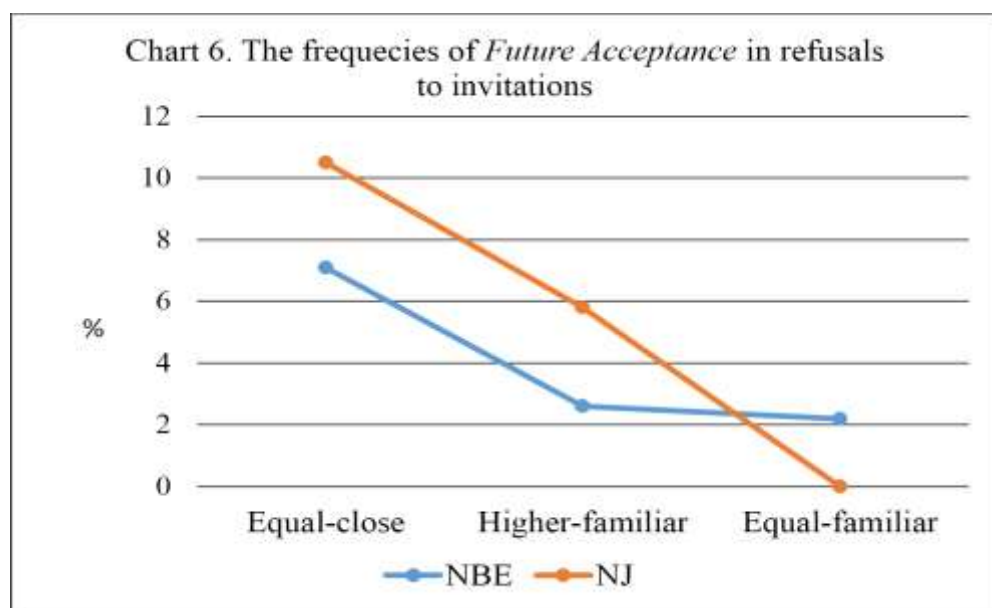
Apology/regret was the most prevalent semantic formula to mitigate refusals to invitations. Chart 5 shows that the research participants varied the frequencies of *Apology/regret* according to the differences in the status levels.



NBEs used the *Apology/regret* to equal-familiar persons more frequently than to those of higher-familiar, and they used it to those of equal-close the least. By contrast, NJs used it to those of higher-familiar markedly more often than to those of equal-familiar, and they used it to those of equal-close the least.

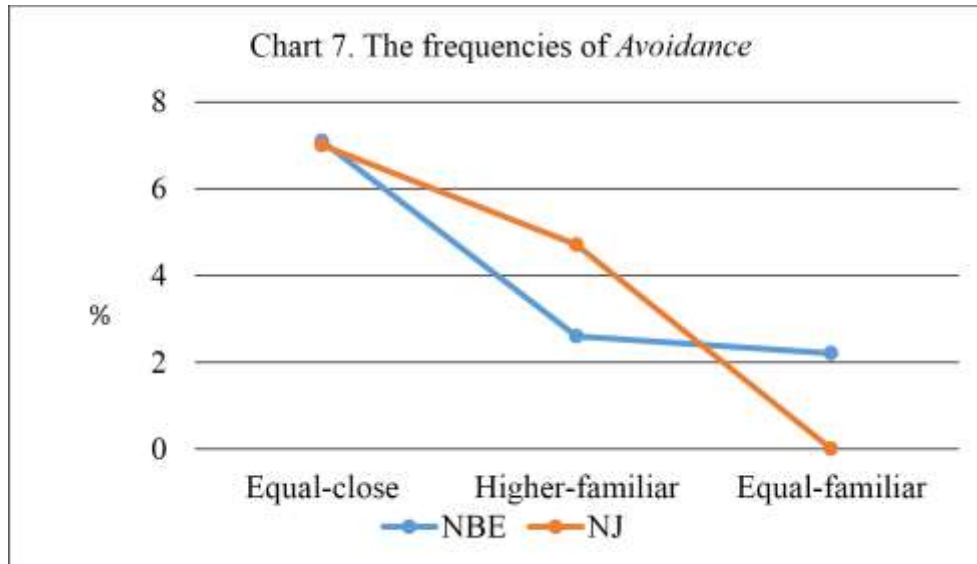
Future Acceptance

Future acceptance was mostly applied to decline invitations. Chart 6 shows that the differences in the collocutors' status levels prompted different frequencies of *Future acceptance*. NBEs used it to equal-close collocutors more frequently than to those of higher-familiar or equal-familiar. Likewise, NJs used it to those of equal-close collocutors more frequently than to those of higher-familiar, but they did not use it to those of equal-familiar.



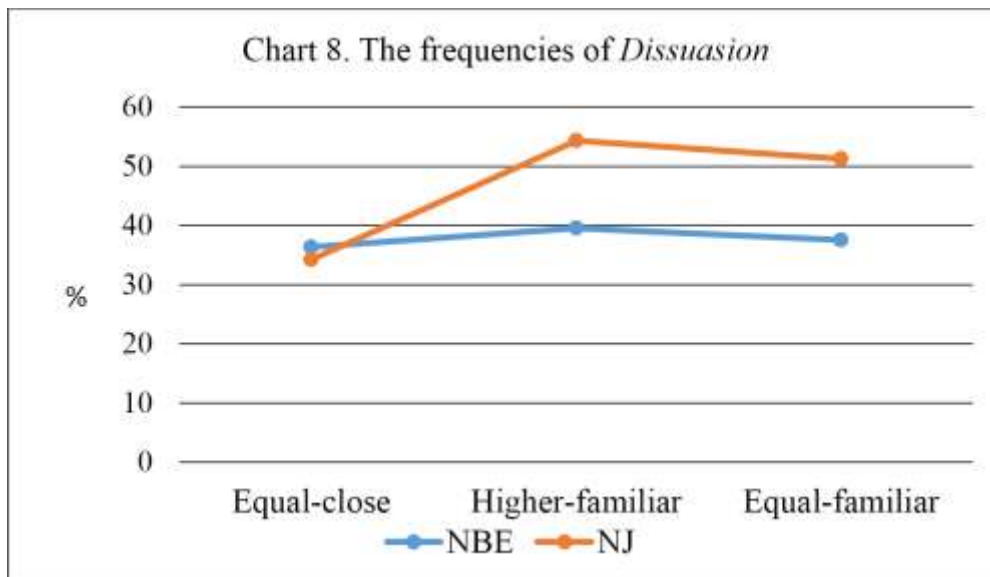
Avoidance

Avoidance was mostly used to decline invitations. Chart 7 shows that the differences in the collocutors' status levels generated different frequencies of *Avoidance*. NBEs used it to equal-close collocutors more frequently than to those of higher-familiar and equal-familiar, who used it more or less similarly. Likewise, NJs used it to those of equal-close more frequently than to those of higher-familiar, but they did not use it to those of equal-familiar.



Dissuasion

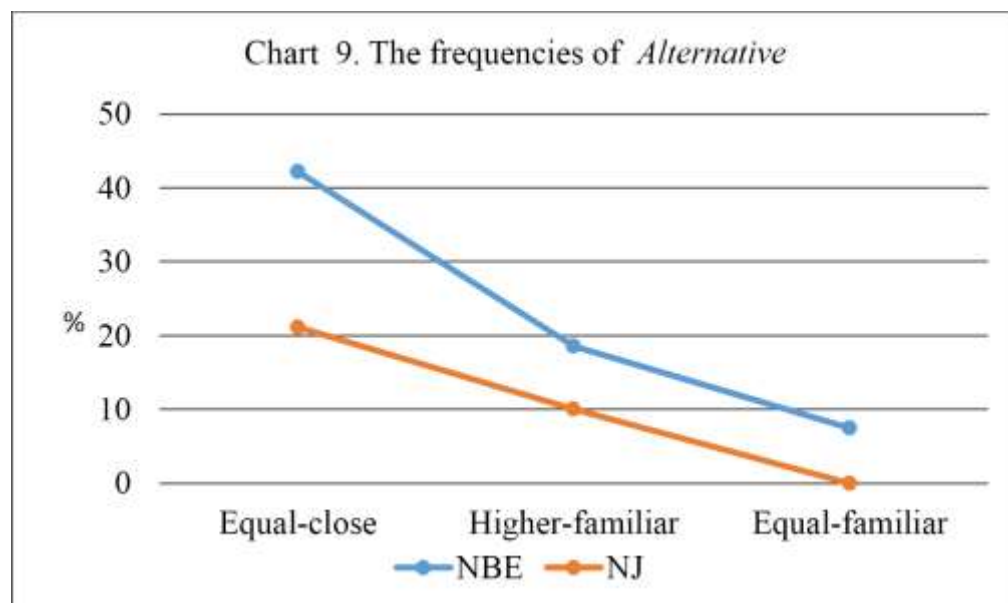
Dissuasion was the most dominant semantic formula in refusals to offers. Chart 8 shows that NBEs used it to collocutors of the three status levels more or less similarly. By contrast, NJs used it to those of higher-familiar slightly more often than to those of equal-familiar, and they used it to those of equal-close the least.



Alternative

Alternative was the second most prevalent semantic formula in refusals to offers. The semantic formula was used particularly highly to decline a friend's offer (situation 4). Chart 9 shows that the differences in the

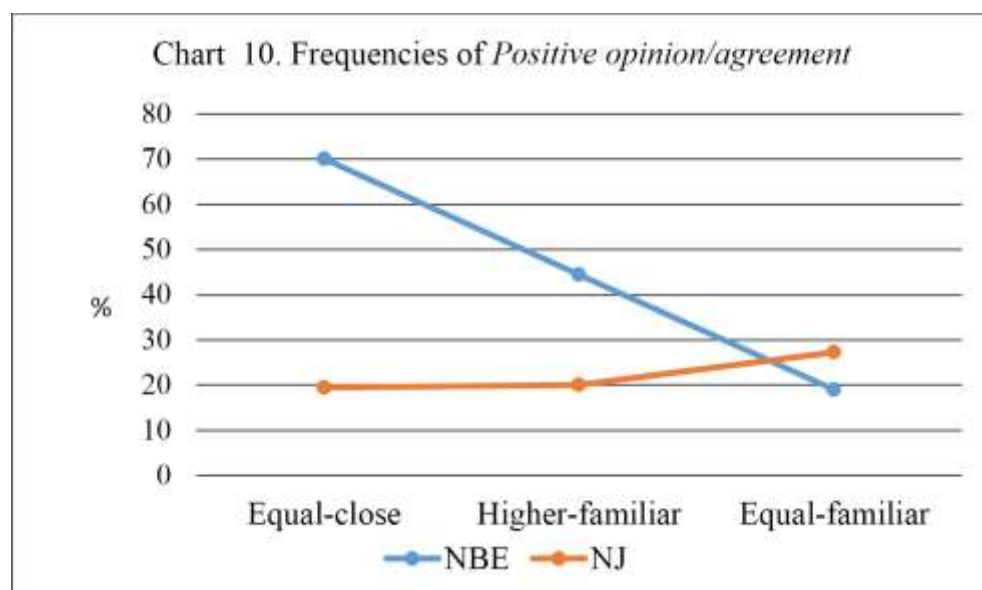
collocutors' status levels induced different frequencies of *Alternative*. NBEs used it to collocutors of equal-close notable more often than to those of higher-familiar, and they used to those of equal-familiar the least. Likewise, NJs used it to those of equal-close notable more often than to those of higher-familiar, but they did not use it to those of equal-familiar.



The Use of Adjuncts

Positive opinion/agreement

Positive opinion/agreement was mostly applied to decline invitations. Chart 10 shows that the differences in the collocutors' status levels generated different frequencies of *Positive opinion/agreement*. NBEs used it to collocutors of equal-close notably more often than to those of higher-familiar, and they used it to those of equal-familiar the least. By contrast, NJs used it to those of equal-familiar more often than to those of higher-familiar or equal-close.



Filler

This adjunct was recurrently applied to decline both invitations and offers. Chart 11 displays the frequencies of *Filler* in refusals to invitations and shows that the differences in the collocutors' status levels induced different frequencies of filler. NBEs used it to collocutors of equal-close slightly more often than to those of equal-familiar, and they used it to those of higher-familiar the least. By contrast, NJs used it to those of equal-close markedly more often than to those of higher-familiar, and used it to those of equal-familiar the least.

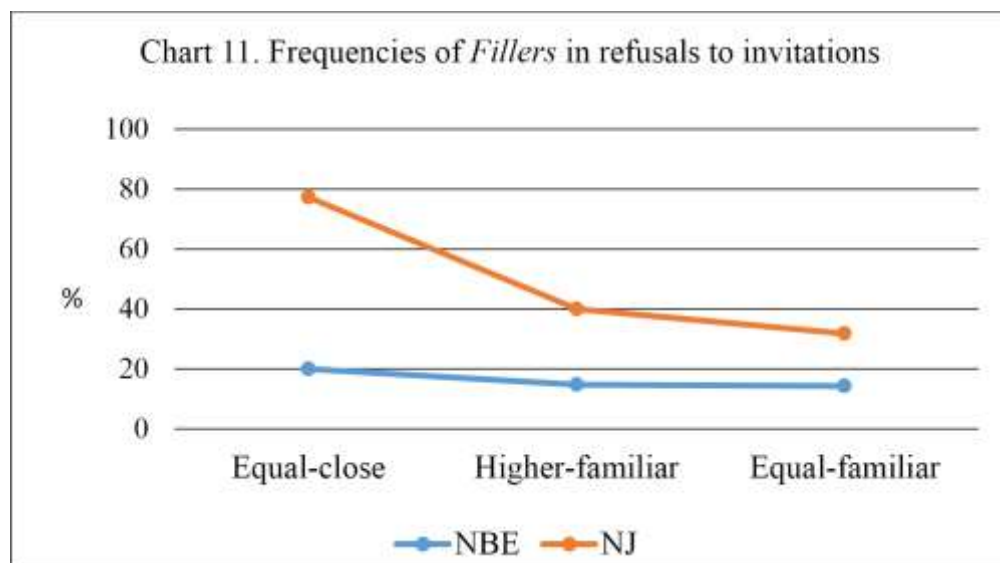
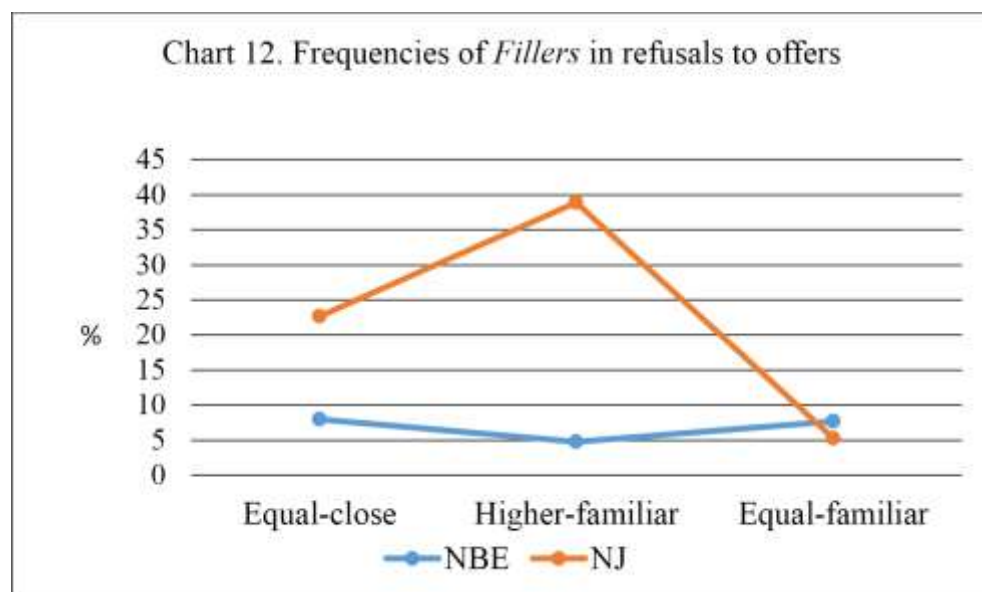


Chart 12 shows the frequencies of *Filler* in refusals to offers. NBEs used it to collocutors of equal-close and equal-familiar approximately similarly, and they used it to those of higher-familiar the least. By contrast, NJs used it to those of higher-familiar markedly more often than to those of equal-close, and they used it to those of equal-familiar the least often.



Gratitude

Gratitude was applied to decline invitations and offers. Chart 13 displays the frequencies of *Gratitude* in refusals to invitations and shows that the differences in the collocutors' status levels induced different frequencies of *Gratitude*. NBEs used it to collocutors of equal-familiar markedly more often than to those of higher-familiar, and they used it to equal-close the least. By contrast, NJs used it to those of higher-familiar more frequently than to those of equal-familiar, and they did not use it to those of equal-close.

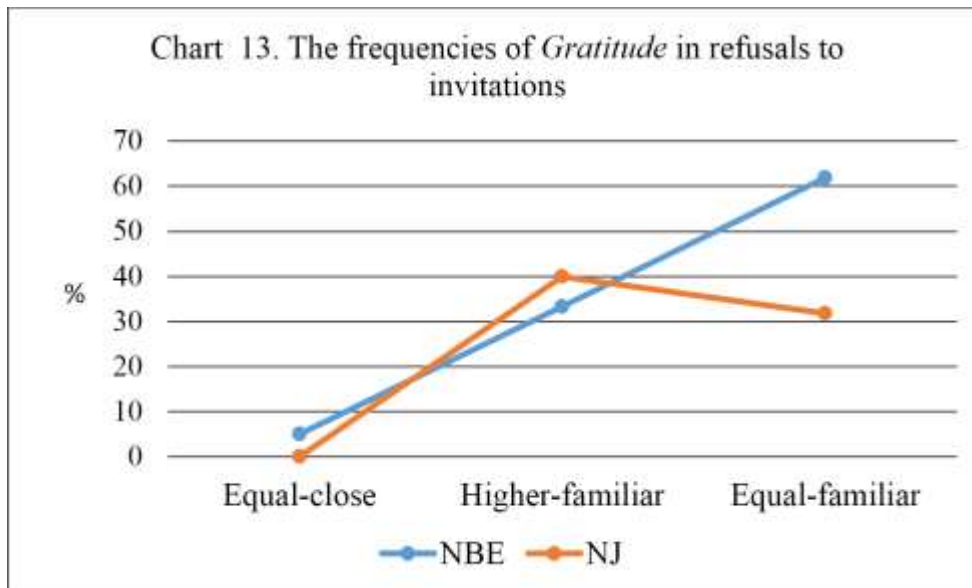
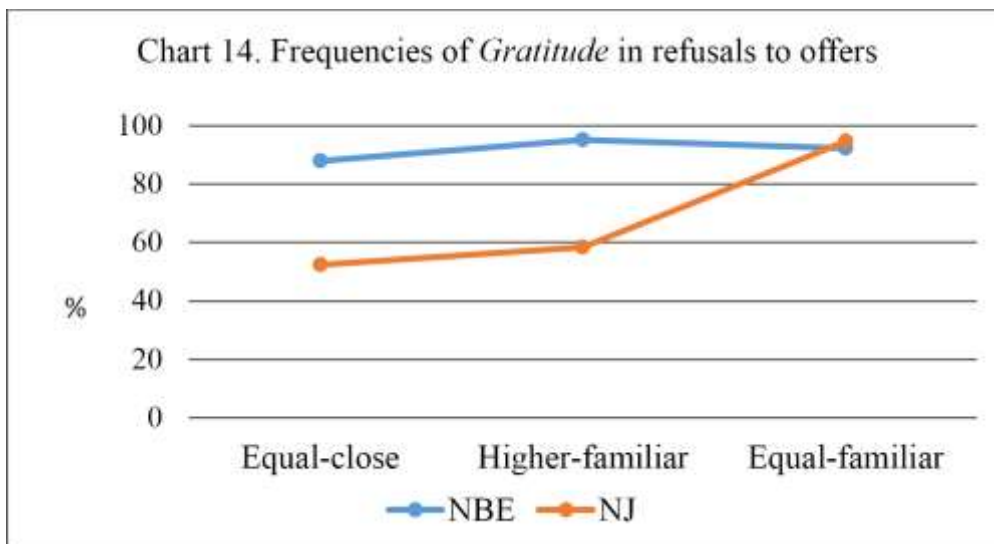


Chart 14 shows the frequencies of *Gratitude* in refusals to offers. The differences in the collocutors' status levels prompted different frequencies of *Gratitude*. NBEs used it to collocutors of higher-familiar more often than to those of equal-familiar, and they used it to those of equal-close the least. By contrast, NJs used it to those of equal-familiar notably more frequently than to those of higher-familiar, and they used it to those of equal-close the least.



Many semantic formulas and adjuncts could be similarly used to refuse offers and invitations, however some were specific to a particular initiating act. *Dissuasion*, *alternative* and *asking for assurance* were employed in refusals to offers whereas *wishing for good luck/ good time* was used in refusals to invitations. Some semantic formulas were used only by a particular group. *Avoidance* was used by NBEs to decline offers. *Acceptance* was used by NJs to refuse invitations.

Discussion

The present study observed refusal strategies to invitations and offers employed by Javanese and British people. It examined the use of direct and indirect refusal strategies, the sequential orders of semantic formulas and adjuncts, and the influences of collocutors' status levels on the use of the types and frequencies of semantic formulas and adjuncts.

In relation to the first research question, the most important result to emerge from the data is that NBEs and NJs similarly preferred indirect refusals to direct ones. There are several possible explanations for the recurrent use of indirect strategies by NJs. First, conveying ideas and intentions indirectly is highly valued in Javanese interpersonal communication (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). Another possible explanation is that giving direct opposing or threatening answers will make other people feel shame, and it in turn causes shame to the speakers themselves as they will be considered immature and even uneducated (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). Also refusing straightforwardly could cause distress to the speakers and disappointment to the hearers, therefore Javanese tend to use indirect refusals (Wijayanto, 2013). By employing the indirect strategies, NJs probably would intend to reduce the risks of disrupting their own peace of mind and to maintain positive relationships with others. The tendency of NJs to apply indirect refusal strategies substantiates previous results (e.g., Esterlina, 2008; Prawito, 2007). As to NBEs, considering that people from individualist nations such as United Kingdom commonly favour direct communication strategies (Adair et al., 2004; Brew and Cairns, 2004), their recurrent use of indirect strategies is rather surprising. Nevertheless, bearing in mind that refusing is intrinsically face threatening (Barron, 2007; Brown and Levinson, 1987), NBEs' strategies are justified: they used indirect refusals to maintain the other interlocutors' face. This suggests that when conducting face-threatening acts such as refusals, people are informed by universal knowledge, that is, they have to employ facework to consider the other interlocutors' face. Nonetheless, there could be cross-cultural differences in the standards and preferences of performing the facework in refusals. For example, to soften the refusals to invitations, NBEs favoured *Positive opinion* and *Gratitude* whereas NJs tended to employ *Fillers* and *Apology*. To mitigate refusals to offers, NBEs frequently chose *Gratitude* and *Alternative* whereas NJs used *Gratitude* and *Dissuasion*.

Adjuncts of refusals are defined by Beebe et al. (1990) as remarks by themselves do not express refusals. It is interesting to note that in the present study adjuncts could function as softeners that mitigated refusals so that they would sound less face-threatening. NJs' and NBEs' different preferences for facework to mitigate refusals have induced different choice of adjuncts. NBEs, practising Western politeness, recurrently applied adjuncts that could maintain the other interlocutors' positive face. By contrast, practising Javanese social harmony, NJs selected adjuncts that could maintain the other interlocutors' feelings.

Another important finding relating to the first research question is that declining a close friend was demanding for NBEs whereas declining persons with higher status (e.g., a boss) was very challenging for NJs. A possible reason for the finding might relate to the social realities in Britain and Javanese. The result would seem to suggest that closeness between interlocutors has important influences on NBEs' refusal strategies. Park and Roberts (2002) have argued that British people maintain strong friendship ties. Even though close friends cannot replace family, they play important roles as the source of emotional support in everyday life or in times of crisis. This might probably explain that declining close friends was rather challenging for NBEs. However, the argument remains tentative and it should be treated with caution. As to NJs, the finding could be explained by the reason that Javanese live in hierarchical social structures in which persons with higher social status, greater power, or more seniority have greater influences over other members of society and they are given more respect (Wijayanto, 2012). Thus communicating with a superior, people have to show *sungkan*: respectful politeness displayed through the feeling of awkward (Geertz, 1961; Koentjaraningrat, 1985). *Sungkan* will be showed more intensely to those who can affect the security of one's carrier or job. This might be the reason that declining persons with a higher status level was rather demanding for NJs.

The last key finding relating to the first research question is that NJs varied the frequencies of direct and indirect refusal strategies to invitations and offers across the status levels significantly differently. The finding provides further evidence of the greater awareness of Javanese towards social hierarchies discussed previously (e.g., Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Magnis-Suseno, 1997; Oktoprimasakti, 2006). By contrast, NBEs did not vary the frequencies of direct and indirect strategies of refusals to invitations, but they did to refusals to offers. The result seems to suggest that imposition could well be responsible for the variations. NBEs might have perceived the imposition of the DCT scenarios of refusing invitations similarly, but they might have perceived the degrees of imposition of each DCT scenario of refusing offers differently therefore they had to vary the strategies.

Regarding the second research question, NJs and NBEs used slightly different sequential orders of refusals to invitations. NJs and NBEs had divergent preferences for the management of face saving strategies, consequently they employed different types of semantic formulas and adjuncts to open and to conclude the sequential orders of refusals to invitations. It is interesting to note that refusing invitations is perceived to be more face-threatening by NJs than by NBEs. For example, to decline invitations, NJs commonly initiated refusals with *Apologies* in conjunction with *Fillers*. They used exclamation particles such as *wah* and *waduh* as *Fillers* to amplify the degree of apologies so that they would sound more apologetic and thus politer. This substantiates previous research of refusals by native speakers of Javanese (Wijayanto, 2012). In Javanese interpersonal communication, refusing invitations not only threatens the face of the persons who extend the invitations but also hurts their feelings. Therefore, it is a norm to express apologies right at the beginning of the refusal (Wijayanto, 2013). Corroborating with the previous result (Liao and Bresnahan, 1996), the present finding shows that NBEs generally opened refusals to invitations with *Positive opinions/agreement* in conjunction with expressions of regret. This could be because, refusals could threaten the addressees' positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and NBEs attended the addressees' positive face by expressing *positive comments/agreements* right at the beginning of the refusals. In addition, many NBEs concluded refusals with adjuncts particularly *Wishing for good time*. The adjunct is a common courteous utterance expressed by speakers who decline an invitation to attend an event. All in all, when refusing invitations NBEs sounded very thoughtful as they initiated and concluded refusals with adjuncts that could maintain the other interlocutors' face. NJs sounded polite, but they appeared to be overly apologetic as they frequently expressed deep apologies.

Regarding the refusals to offers, NJs and NBEs used slightly different sequential orders of semantic formulas and adjuncts. A cross-cultural difference was observed in the ways in which both groups justified the refusals. As NBEs received an offer of help (DCT situation 5 and 6), they declined the offer by recurrently using *Alternative* in conjunction with *Gratitude*. This suggests that NBEs valued self-reliance and independence. The finding points to the ethos of persons from individualist culture, who commonly address problems independently (Triandis, 2001). By contrast, NJs tended to employ *Dissuasion* in conjunction with *Gratitude*. The result points to the probability that NJs might have used the *Dissuasion* to express polite refusals since declining offers dissuasively is polite in Javanese (Wijayanto, 2013).

Regarding the third research question, the most important finding of the present study is that different social status levels prompted different use of semantic formulas and adjuncts of refusals. The finding concurs with previous studies (e.g., Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Kwon, 2004; Nelson, et al., 2002; Oktoprimasakti, 2006; Wannaruk, 2008). Importantly, the finding suggests that both native speakers were status conscious. The finding provides further support of the literature discussing the status conscious of Javanese people (Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Magnis-Suseno, 1997; Oktoprimasakti, 2006). However, NBEs' strategies are unanticipated as native speakers of English are generally described by literature as egalitarian (Birch, 1998) and direct (Adair et al., 2004; Brew and Cairns, 2004). It is possible that familiarities or closeness between interlocutors and levels of imposition could account for the result.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted to observe refusal strategies to invitations and offers employed by Javanese (NJs) and British people (NBEs). The results of the present study indicate that when performing face-threatening acts such as refusals, NJs and NBEs employed universal knowledge, that is, they had to consider polite ways of expressing them. To avoid threatening the other interlocutors' face when refusing invitations and offers, NBEs and NJs similarly favoured indirect refusal strategies. Nevertheless, NJs and NBEs used different sequential orders of refusals. Minor differences were found in the way in which they chose semantic formulas and adjuncts to mitigate the refusals. Importantly, although many semantic formulas and adjuncts could be similarly used to refuse offers and invitations, some were specific to a particular initiating act and some others were used only by a particular group of native speakers (NJs or NBEs). This paper has highlighted that the awareness of different social status levels induced Javanese to vary the types and the frequencies of occurrences of semantic formulas and adjuncts of refusals. NBEs also varied the types and frequencies of semantic formulas and adjuncts across the six DCT situations, however the result suggests that they were provoked by the levels of imposition of the DCT situations rather than by the different status levels.

Some limitations of the present study need to be considered. First, the study obtained the data through DCTs. Although the ODCTs were able to elicit refusal strategies, they only reflected what the research participant believed to be the right responses and, therefore, they might represent different refusal strategies as compared with refusals obtained from authentic conversations. Next, the number of research participants was limited; therefore, the findings might not represent the refusal strategies of Javanese and British people at large. The study did not conduct a systematic analysis of the politeness strategies used in the refusals. Future work will look into politeness strategies and mitigation used to modify refusals.

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